United Nations A/55/864–S/2001/292

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
29 March 2001

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session
Agenda item 40
The situation in the Middle East

Security Council
Fifty-sixth year

Letter dated 29 March 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith a letter dated 23 March 2001 addressed to you by Mahmourd Hammoud, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lebanon.

I have the honour to kindly request that the enclosed letter be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 40, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Selim **Tadmoury**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

01-31153 (E) 300301 300301

Annex to the letter dated 29 March 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

I should like to inform you of some disturbing developments that need to be brought to your attention.

While Lebanon is proceeding to rebuild the infrastructure destroyed by Israel during the 22 years of the occupation and to meet its responsibility to provide vital services to the villages and areas liberated from Israeli occupation, Israel is confronting us with further threats based on allegations and delusions in preparation for the launching of fresh attacks on Lebanese territory on the fabricated grounds that Lebanon has set about diverting the course of the Hasbani river and depriving Israel of its water.

The fact is that on 20 February 2001 the competent Lebanese authorities began to lay a pipe from the Wazzani spring in order to supply water to the villages of Wazzani and Maysat in response to a request from the inhabitants to resume the pumping of water to the villages that had been customary before the Israeli occupation. In its time, the latter had deliberately destroyed the Lebanese pipeline and pumps and had deprived the population of the use of the water for drinking, household use or irrigation.

After technicians were sent to make a physical inspection and assess the needs and the measures required to meet them, work began on the provision of water with the building of a hut near the spring for the installation of pumps, the laying of a 4-inch-diameter pipeline and the erection of electricity poles so that the pumps could be operated by electric power.

The technical teams continued their work of bringing water to Wazzani and Maysat in the midst of overflights by warplanes and helicopters in Lebanese airspace in flagrant violation of Lebanese sovereignty. This was accompanied by intense and distrustful monitoring by the Israeli military from beyond the border fence and by casual and brazen crossings of the Blue Line established by the United Nations. It should be noted that the authorities in question had notified the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) of the nature of the project and had requested its help in providing protection for the workers as a precaution against Israeli provocations or hindrances.

While, in accordance with its legitimate rights and in order to meet the vital subsistence requirements of the inhabitants, Lebanon is endeavouring to bring water that rises in and flows through its own territory to two impoverished villages that have been deprived of it, Israel is waging an escalating campaign against it that is freighted with allegations that Lebanon will withhold the water of the Hasbani river from it by taking operational measures for this purpose, and it is threatening, through the official Israeli military and civil authorities, to launch a war against Lebanon and to direct a military strike against the Lebanese installations designed to bring water to the two villages.

In the light of the foregoing, Lebanon would like to state as follows:

1. The Israeli allegations are devoid of truth and have the objective of obstructing Lebanon's restoration to health and the rebuilding of the infrastructure destroyed by Israel during the years of its occupation of southern Lebanon. The work is being carried out openly and with the knowledge of UNIFIL, as has been confirmed by Mr. Timur Göksel in a statement refuting the allegations made and denying that Lebanon was engaged in diverting the waters of the Hasbani river. He has stated that workers were installing a 4-inch-diameter pipe to convey water from the Wazzani spring to an impoverished village in need of it, and that it was not possible to speak of diverting a river by using such a small pipe. Mr. Göksel's statement reflects the reality of the situation in a manner that is not devoid of frank astonishment at the Israeli claims.

2. Lebanon affirms its right to its own water, and it rejects Israeli attempts to expropriate and exploit it.

3. It alerts the Secretariat to the Israeli threats to launch fresh attacks on its territory and installations, and it will hold Israel responsible for the consequences of any act of aggression against such installations. It calls upon you to take the necessary measures, on an urgent basis, to deter Israel from its threats and its violations of Lebanese sovereignty.

4. I take this opportunity to express the appreciation of the Lebanese Government for the impartial attitude adopted by the United Nations in southern Lebanon following the recent Israeli threats in connection with this matter and to thank the Organization for UNIFIL's continued fulfilment of its mandate and, in particular, for the humanitarian assistance and medical care it provides to the local inhabitants and for its active participation in the task of clearing the mines laid by Israel in the area.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mahmoud **Hammoud**
Minister for Foreign Affairs